The Organization, Direction and Maintenance of the Mandolin Orchestra

By WILLIAM PLACE, JR.

The Organization, Direction and Maintenance of the MANDOLIN ORCHESTRA

For Director, Teacher and Player

By
WILLIAM PLACE, JR.

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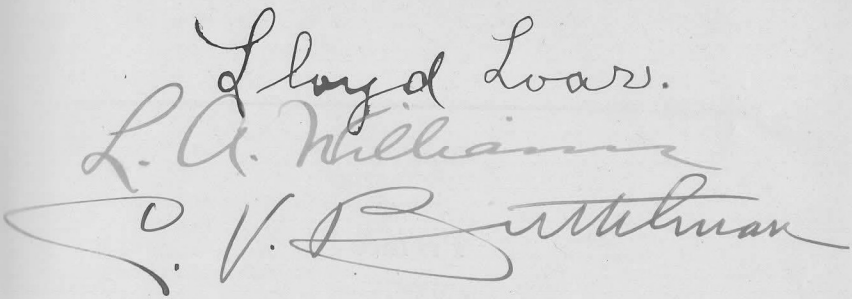
WILLIAM PLACE, JR.

America's Greatest Mandolin Virtuoso



To

Clinton, Milburn and Ted

through whose enthusiasm and whole-hearted co-operation I learned the joys of both plectral ensemble and good fellowship.

Preface

During the past ten years, the writer has been fortunate enough to be leader of a quartet which attained a national reputation; concert-meister of one of the largest orchestras in America and conductor of several orchestras which have become well known. These experiences coupled with the privilege of being soloist for nearly every large mandolin orchestra east of the Mississippi have resulted in a broader knowledge of the mandolin orchestra than is usually accorded the average mandolin player and in response to oft-repeated requests for details concerning the mandolin orchestra of today, its organization and direction, I have compiled this book.

I have written as a free lance, and while many of the statements contained herein may seem radical, nevertheless they are founded upon fact and experience. I have no axe to grind and the instruments and publications recommended are endorsed because I thoroughly believe at this writing that they are the best that money can buy, and I present this little volume to the eminent fraternity of plectralists with every hope that it may prove instructive.

WILLIAM PLACE, JR.

Providence, Rhode Island,
July 1, 1917.

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CHAPTER I

The Modern Mandolin Orchestra

TO those who have not kept apace with the growth of the American mandolin, the mere name of this formerly abused instrument, is immediately suggestive of a group of hilarious college boys each armed with a "potato-bug" mandolin, apparently intent upon tearing the strings from the little instrument with a plectrum resembling a mason's trowel. This mental picture is neither overdrawn nor without foundation, for during the pioneer days of plectral ensemble the mandolin usually posed as an infraction to anything akin to musical art. Happily, for both the mandolin and the long suffering public, the old fashioned mandolin *club* is a matter of history and the modern mandolin *orchestra* has not only taken its place but has made the mandolin and its kindred, instruments for serious consideration. To dwell at length upon the history of the mandolin is not the purpose of this book but I would say in passing that at this writing no one need feel ashamed to be known as a player of the fretted instruments for the greatest of critics have pronounced the modern American mandolin, mandola, mando-cello, mando-bass and guitar capable of producing music which is not only unique but satisfying to the most cultured musician and absolutely original both in tonal construction and effect.

OLD FASHIONED MANDOLIN CLUB PASSES

With the passing of the old fashioned mandolin *club* composed of mandolins and guitars, came the new mandolin orchestra—an ensemble scientifically organized according to standard musical precedent, consisting of first and second man-

dolins, mandolas, mando-cellos, mando-basses, guitars, harp-guitars, Irish harps and such other wood wind, brass, or percussion instruments of the standard orchestra as the director may consider suitable.

As a medium for musical relaxation after fatiguing hours of business, nothing can quite compare with the actual benefit derived from being a member of a mandolin orchestra. There is something intensely interesting in being a part of any well trained musical organization and the elementary technic of the plectral instruments being extremely simple, the results obtained from a mandolin orchestra composed entirely of young students are often far ahead of the so-called professional standard orchestra.

Wherever one may be located, the community is indeed an unusual one, if three or four plectral enthusiasts cannot be found and many of our largest orchestras began with three or four players. Players of the plectral instruments are invariably enthusiasts and fairly teem with the germs of "plectralitis," a malady both pleasant and profitable.

INSTRUMENTATION OF THE MODERN MANDOLIN ORCHESTRA

To the reader, unfamiliar with the instrumentation of the modern mandolin orchestra a few words of explanation may be acceptable.

The mandolins are divided into two groups, the first mandolins playing the melody, which corresponds to the soprano in vocal ensemble; the second mandolins playing the second or alto part. The tenor mandolas as the name indicates, play the tenor part, the mando-cellos, the baritone, and the mando-basses, the bass. These five parts constitute the foundation of the mandolin orchestra as it is recognized today but I ardently hope that as time goes on, new instruments of both the plectral and wood wind type will be evolved, expressly for embellishment of the light and etherial tone quality of plectral ensemble. After the mandolin quintet, in the string section, come the guitars and harp guitars. These instruments are used in various ways by directors and in the opinion of the writer a strong

guitar and harp-guitar section is far more effective than the piano.

Next comes the banjo. This instrument is played in two ways; with the fingers, like a guitar; and with a plectrum, like a mandolin. In the modern mandolin orchestra, banjo parts are usually of the obligato variety and the instrument appears at its best when used in embellishments and figures of contrast.

The last accepted instrument of the string section is the harp. In a large orchestra of thirty-five or more players, nothing can quite equal the large concert harp for variety and contrast and the bass strings often add greatly where body and depth of tone are required, but for use in small ensemble the concert harp is not to be recommended, for regardless of the proficiency of the player the overtones are so great that the instrument unwittingly predominates unless played "etouffe," and, when this is done, much of the characteristic tone quality is lost.

For the average small ensemble, the Irish harp is all that could be desired. Harp like in quality, yet light enough to stand as a dainty and intricate background, it fills a long-felt want in the modern mandolin orchestra.

BOWED INSTRUMENTS NOT EFFECTIVE

Owing to the lessening or diminishing amplitude of vibrations from the plucked string, the bowed instruments are *not* effective when used in conjunction with the mandolin and kindred instruments, and up-to-date conductors never feature the bowed and plucked string instruments together as regular instrumentation. Although the cembalo is not generally accepted as belonging to the mandolin orchestra the writer has found this instrument very effective in large ensemble and he would recommend it to orchestra conductors who are seeking new tone colors.

Flute, clarinet, oboe and bassoon are all excellent when used as augmentative instruments, but I do not believe in the use of brass except in orchestras of mammoth proportions and then only when in the hands of expert players; the French horn, however, excepted. Drums, tympani, orchestra bells,

xylophone and marimba may all be used effectively. Therefore a modern mandolin orchestra of unlimited instrumentation *may* contain:

STRING SECTION

First and second mandolins

Mandolas Mando-cellos

Mando-basses

Guitars and harp-guitars, Banjos

Irish harps or concert harp cembalo

WOOD-WIND SECTION

Flute Clarinet

Oboe Bassoon

BRASS

Cornet Trombone

French horns

PERCUSSION

Drums Tympani

MISCELLANEOUS

Cembalo Xylophone

Marimba Orchestra bells

Piano

It is not to be understood that all of the above instruments are necessary to the mandolin orchestra, although all are used by various directors but to the writer, the perfect mandolin orchestra of today consists of a large section of mandolins, mandolas, mando-cellos, mando-basses and guitars. A small banjo section; Irish harp section, one cembalo; a complete wood-wind section; one French horn; drums, tympani and trap instruments.

The director who is organizing a new orchestra should first secure his complete mandolin family section and later add the other instruments.

CHAPTER II

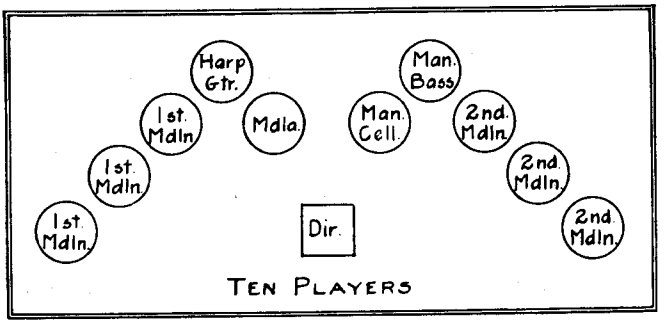
Organization and Seating Arrangement

MANY a B. M. G. player in years agone has picked away by himself, fired by enthusiasm and love for his instruments while within him there was a constant longing for musical companionship, a continual desire to find someone plectrally in sympathy with him. To enthusiasts of this type, the mandolin orchestra comes as a veritable god-send and while many a plectral genius in times gone by has died unknown and unrecognized, nevertheless, there is no necessity for plectral solitaire in these days, for mandolin orchestra organization is now a simple proceeding.

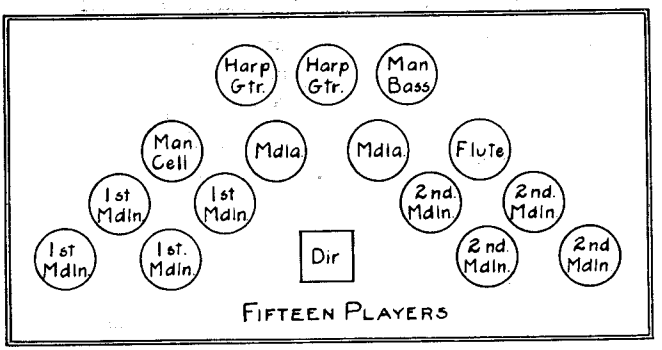
I do not believe there is a town large enough to bear a name in which several players of the plectral instruments cannot be secured. Those who are not players are often easily interested, for in small towns especially any novel form of diversion is taken up whole-heartedly.

METHODS FOR OBTAINING PLAYERS

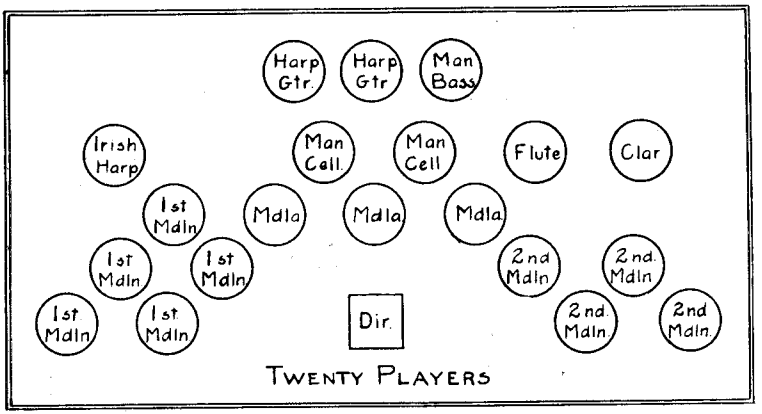
Various methods for obtaining players are adopted, depending upon the size of the town or city. In a small community I have found that personal interviews proved most successful. By inquiry among the older residents it is an easy matter to learn the names of persons interested in music and it is well to remember that *the beginners of today will be the players of tomorrow,* therefore the wise director will not spurn the merest tyro, for the beginner in music is like the growing child, susceptible to direction, and a mediocre player who knows what a director wants and can play as he directs is worth far more than the great technician who can execute anything placed



TEN PLAYERS



FIFTEEN PLAYERS



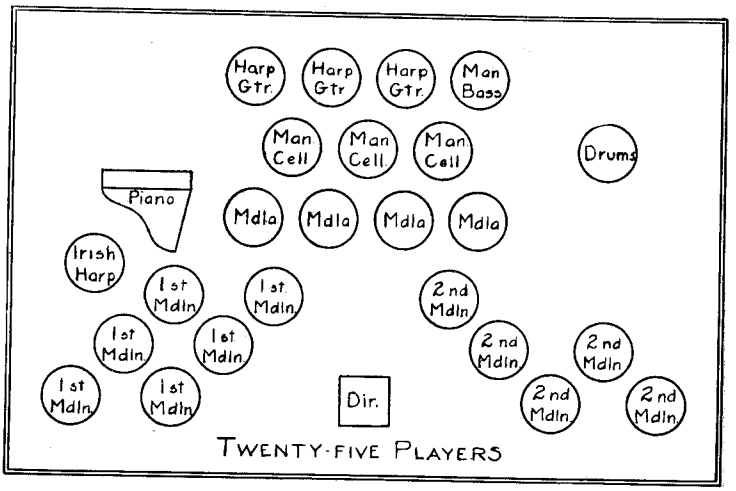
TWENTY PLAYERS

before him in his own way, but utterly fails to comprehend the requirements of his leader.

In the average city one may aspire to a much larger organization than in a small community and, therefore, securing players by inquiry followed by personal interview is a slow proceeding.

NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

The first mandolin orchestra, which the writer ever organized, was in one of the large Eastern cities and at the

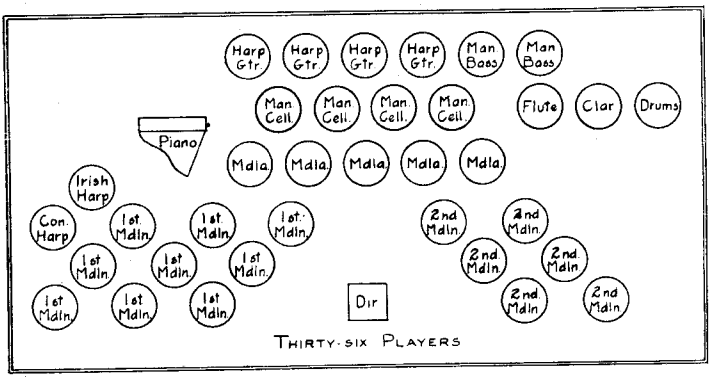


meeting for organization sixty-three members were present, and nearly every player came in answer to a newspaper ad placed in the ordinary miscellaneous "Wanted" columns. The ad read as follows:

> Wanted—Mandolin, mandola mando-cello, mando-bass and guitar players for amateur orchestra of 100 players. William Place, Jr.

As soon as a prospect answered the ad I wrote him a letter telling him of the plan, asking him to call and talk it over. In

the letter I assured him that it was not a money-making scheme, but was to be a musical organization which would endeavor to show the people of our city that the plectral instruments were really worth while. Anyone who is interested in a



particular subject is always glad to be one of a number to promote an interest in it in his town or city.

In selecting an appropriate ad I found that by placing the number of players at a larger figure than I dared hope to secure, the readers were impressed with the magnitude of the enterprise and musical people of the city began talking about the new organization, the largest ever organized in our State, etc. I also found that the words mandola, mando-cello, and mando-bass proved good advertising for the proposed organization, as these instruments, while common to us, are scarcely known outside of plectral circles and curiosity was immediately aroused. On several occasions, prior to the organization of the orchestra, the writer was questioned concerning the new instruments, and several new converts were obtained in this way.

Mr. C. V. Buttelman, former Secretary-Treasurer and Field Secretary of the American Guild, is the most successful organizer I have ever met and during the season of 1915-1916 we conducted the Jackson School of Music with branches in three other Michigan cities, and a photograph of the Festival orchestra may be seen in the frontispiece of this book.

Mr. Buttelman's plan was to operate through the Young Mens' and Young Womens' Christian Associations. It is rare if the social Secretary cannot give one the names of a dozen or fifteen players and with this number as a nucleus, a splendid start can be made.

THE AMERICAN GUILD CHAPTER PLAN

Practically all reputable teachers of the banjo, mandolin, guitar and kindred instruments are members of the American Guild. One of the most important features of this organization is the Guild Chapter plan.

A Chapter formed in any city by reputable players gives an orchestra a certain degree of prestige in the musical world, and I earnestly advise every orchestra director to insist that his organization affiliate with the Guild as a Chapter. If a Chapter has already been formed in your city, do not feel that you are obliged to become a member of it in order to enjoy the Guild privileges. There is undoubtedly room for another Chapter in your city and if you can convince the Field Secretary that you have the material for another live organization, he will undoubtedly grant you a charter for———Chapter No.—.

The charter fee, good for the entire life of the Chapter, is $5.00 with an annual per capita tax of twenty-five cents. Thus for only a quarter of a dollar a year each Chapter member becomes associated with the American Guild and the organization is listed among the Chapters published in the *Cadenza,* the official organ of the American Guild.

Every orchestra director will find himself amply repaid for communicating with the Field Secretary for the Guild is a big, live, wide-awake organization, and of which any player may feel proud to be a member.

The name and address of the Field Secretary for the present year may be obtained from the Gibson Mandolin-Guitar Company, Kalamazoo, Mich., the publishers of this book. It is the Field Secretary's duty to assist you in organizing your orchestra and he will show you every attention and courtesy.

Booklets telling of Chapter activities are issued and mailed to members, newslets of *every* Chapter are printed monthly in the official organ, and every possible assistance is accorded members.

MEETING FOR ORGANIZATION

After securing sufficient players, the director should call a meeting for organization. A brief note is written to each member, telling the place of meeting and the date, with the added information that *players are expected to bring their instruments.*

I cannot impress this last point too strongly, for *it is imperative for the success of the organization that a little playing be done the first meeting.* At best, an organization meeting is a dry affair, and inasmuch as your society is to be a musical one, it will start rolling the ball of enthusiasm if the director supplies one simple selection that all may participate in playing.

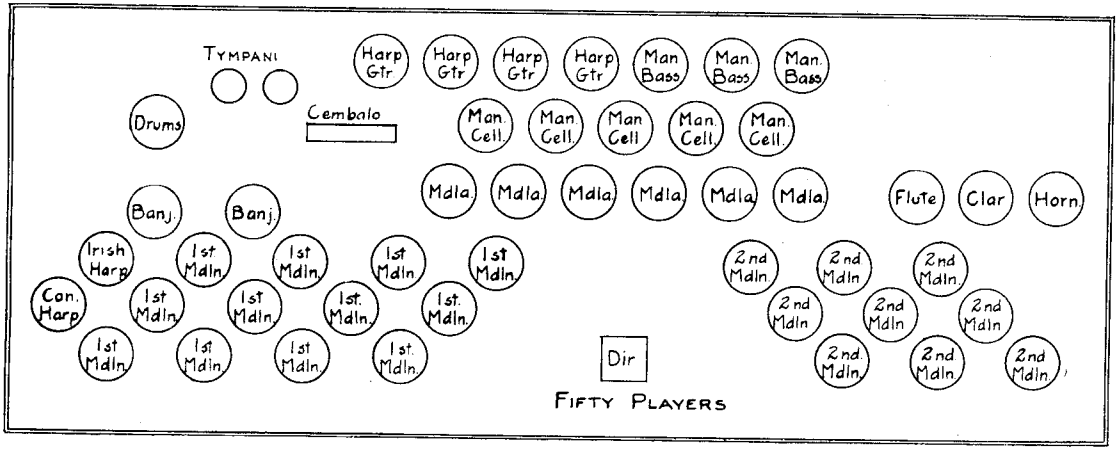
The first move is to elect officers. In order to open the meeting, someone should be appointed Secretary *pro tem;* after which a *ballot* vote for the following officers should be taken.

Musical Director
President Vice-President
Secretary Treasurer
Librarian
Board of three directors

DUTIES OF MUSICAL DIRECTOR AND HIS QUALIFICATIONS

It is the duty of the musical director to conduct and criticize the orchestra from a musical standpoint. It is understood that his "word is law." He is monarch of the orchestra, and no one should presume to criticize his interpretations. He need not necessarily be the best player, but he should be the best versed in the art of music, and understand phrasing and interpretation thoroughly. A knowledge of harmony and orchestration helps immensely; in fact, any musical specializing which one may have done broadens him in the making of a successful director.

Above all, the director of the mandolin orchestra should


Tympani
Harp Gtr
Harp Gtr
Harp Gtr
Harp Gtr
Man Bass
Man Bass
Man Bass
Drums
Cembalo
Man Cell.
Man Cell.
Man Cell.
Man Cell.
Man Cell.
Mdla.
Mdla.
Mdla.
Mdla.
Mdla.
Mdla.
Flute
Clar
Horn
Banj.
Banj.
Irish Harp
1st Mdln.
1st Mdln.
1st Mdln.
1st Mdln.
Con. Harp
1st Mdln.
1st Mdln.
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Dir
Fifty Players

have a working knowledge of each instrument in the orchestra so that he may secure a desirable balance, and be able to take advantage of the minute details which are the making of any musical enterprise. To be a good conductor of a standard string orchestra is of but little value toward securing the peculiar plectral effects, which are the most striking points in our ensemble; one *must know the fretted instruments and understand their possibilities in detail.* One of the most striking examples of good plectral orchestra conducting was by W. W. Andreeff, of the Balalaika Orchestra, which toured America. Mr. Andreeff was a student of the domra and balalaika and had a working knowledge of the cello and bass balalaikas and the goosley. Thus equipped, he realized the limit of his ensemble in both extremes, and secured effects that came as a revelation to thousands of mandolin orchestra conductors.

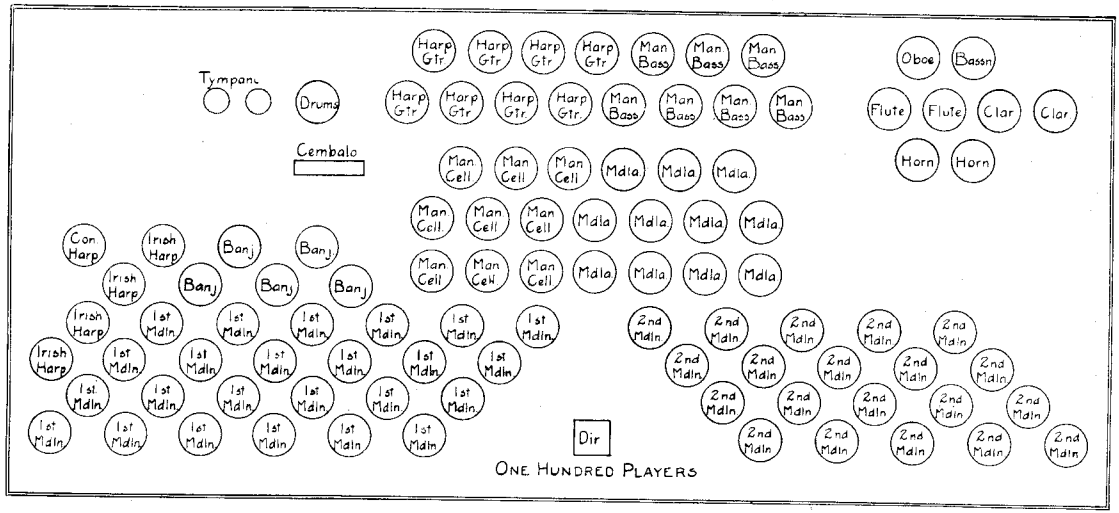
NEVER SACRIFICE MUSIC FOR NOISE

I would caution every director in the matter of securing sufficient volume. *Remember that you are working with a mandolin orchestra, NOT A BRASS BAND.* Strive continually for musical effects, and for a fortissimo climax secure as much volume as you can, but *keep the volume musical.* Never sacrifice music for noise. The plectral orchestra appears at its best in selections which require medium and light tone values. *Stick to music that fits the instruments.*

DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS

The President is the first social officer of the organization, and his election is the first business of the annual meeting. It is the President's duty to preside at all meetings and conduct the executive affairs as becomes any chief executive. The next officer is the Vice-president, who in the absence of the President, assumes the chair, and acts as substitute for the chief. Meetings should be conducted on approved parliamentary lines, according to Robert's Rules of Order.

To the Secretary belongs the duty of keeping the records or minutes of all the meetings, and at each business meeting, the minutes of the previous assembly must be read and approved by vote. Some orchestras vest the dual office of Secretary-treasurer in one person, but it has been the expe-


Tympani
Drums
Cembalo
Harp Gtr
Man Bass
Oboe
Bassn
Flute
Clar
Horn
Man Cell
Mdla
Con Harp
Irish Harp
Banj
1st Mdln
2nd Mdln
Dir
ONE HUNDRED PLAYERS

rience of the writer that there is quite enough work for two people. The Secretary should keep an attendance book and call the roll at each rehearsal.

It is the duty of the Treasurer to collect dues and assessments and fines; to keep an accurate record of all moneys paid into the orchestra treasury, and to make a semi-annual report of the financial standing of the organization. Two weeks prior to the annual meeting, his books should be submitted to the board of directors for auditing.

The Librarian attends to all music, which should always be the property of the orchestra, collectively. He should see that every member is supplied with his part during rehearsals, concerts, etc. In orchestras, which the writer has directed, the Librarian took charge of the music stands, and at concerts directed the property man in placing them. He also placed the director's baton upon the directing desk. In some orchestras, this work is assigned to the concert-meister, an officer whose duties will be described later.

The executive board consists of the regular officers of the orchestra including the musical director and three other members of the orchestra who are selected by ballot of the majority membership of the orchestra present. The executive board should meet once a month, and discuss matters pertaining to the good of the organization. In this board all of the executive power is vested. In case of differences of opinion arising between members, the matter should be referred to the board and settled in that way. Never allow dissatisfaction to gain a foothold. Immediately bring it to light and place it squarely before the executive board.

APPOINTMENT OF CONCERT-MEISTER

There is one other appointment which while not official is the most honorary position in the orchestra. This is the position of concert-meister.

The concert-meister is appointed by the director and is conceded to be one of the best players in the orchestra. He sits in chair number one of the first mandolin section. It is his duty to see that all the instruments are in tune, to mark the proper stroking of all difficult passages, and to see that

these passages **are played as he has marked them.** When a solo passage or cadenza is required in the first mandolin part, the concert-meister plays it. It should be considered a great honor to be chosen concert-meister of a mandolin orchestra, for it is quite as responsible a position as that of musical director. While the director is the mainspring of the orchestra, the concert-meister may be called the balance wheel.

With the officers elected, and their duties defined, we are ready to begin with the musical training. Every orchestra must have a definite seating arrangement *and each member should always occupy the same seat.*

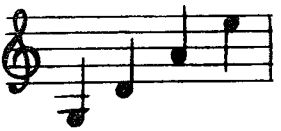
I could write indefinitely upon the subjects of instrument combinations, balance and seating arrangement, but without knowing the material which each individual director has at his disposal, the suggestions would be of little value except in extremely large combinations and so instead of writing at length on these subjects I have prepared diagrams showing the seating arrangements of combinations of from ten to one hundred players. Having had experience with practically all of the combinations illustrated, I submit them to the plectral fraternity with the assurance that for musical plectral effects they will not be found wanting.

I am aware that the seating arrangement illustrated for some of the larger combinations is not in accordance with time honored precedent, but from experience, I am positive that for plectral ensemble it is desirable.

CHAPTER III

The Instruments of the Mandolin Orchestra

Mandolin
Open strings.



AFTER studying the preceding diagrams, the reader will note that the first mandolins are invariably seated at the left of the director. As I have said before, the first mandolins usually play the soprano or melody part in the orchestra. However, instances occur occasionally in which some other instrument has the melody, and the first mandolins are given an obligato part, but generally speaking the first mandolins are the "lead" instruments. While it is imperative that every player in the orchestra should watch the director religiously, no section is more bound to this rule than the first mandolin group. The melody part whether played by two or twenty players *must be as one instrument* and directors should rehearse the first mandolins over and over until the part is as near perfection as the director's ability can make it. Nothing is more disgusting in musical ensemble than a "sloppy" lead. (Pardon the expression, but no other word conveys my meaning as adequately). The concert-meister should mark the correct plectrum strokes in any difficult passages, that occur in the first mandolin part and insist, with the co-operation of the director, that every first mandolin player execute alike. To the writer, appearance is almost as important as the music in the development of a mandolin orchestra, and I have al-

ways insisted that each section of my mandolin-family choir move their wrists with exact uniformity. The well trained appearance that this one feature presents is worth hours of toil on the part of the conductor.

SPEED OF TREMOLO IMPORTANT

While on the subject of uniformity of execution, a word regarding speed of tremolo may not be amiss. I have found that with the Place Quartet, each player is sufficiently master of technique to tremolo with exactly the same speed. This may seem almost beyond belief, but it is absolutely true. I have had small groups of advanced players who could execute with nearly as great precision, but in this stage of plectral development it would indeed be difficult to secure a large number of players trained to so fine a point. The director, however, should insist upon as near a uniform tremolo as possible, for the "smoothness" of a performance depends greatly upon this point, especially in slow and sustained numbers. First and foremost give the most **detailed** attention to your first mandolin section. Secure a concert-meister who **knows the mandolin** and understands its technical side, rely upon him to instruct the players, and work incessantly for uniformity.

THE SECOND MANDOLINS

The second mandolins play the alto part in the mandolin family choir. The second mandolin problem is really the most difficult one with which the mandolin orchestra conductor must cope. Amateur players seem to feel that it is more or less of a disgrace to play second mandolin. Nothing could be farther from the truth, for in string quartet work, the second mandolin player has a part fully as difficult as the first, and in violin works of the old masters, who specialized in string quartet form, the second violin often requires greater technical facility than any of the other instruments. Unlike the monotonous after beat parts of the violin **dance** orchestra, which are allotted to the second violin, the second mandolin, in mandolin orchestration has a distinctly interesting part. Conductors should impress upon their players that it is quite as much an honor to play second, as first, and back this

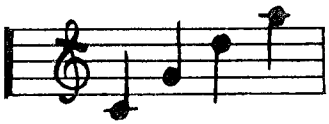
assertion by selecting several of the best mandolin players in the orchestra to sit in the second section. It is, of course, to be understood that the first section must not be crippled by so doing. Keep the educated, fine-grained players on your first section, and let the rougher, but stable players, fill the second chairs.

A LEADER FOR EACH SECTION

I have found it an excellent plan to appoint a leader for each section who sits in the first chair as does the concert-meister; all of these "lead" players are subject to the authority of the concert-meister. This will be found particularly helpful in large orchestras of over a hundred players.

THE MANDOLAS

Mandola
Open strings.
Universal Notation.



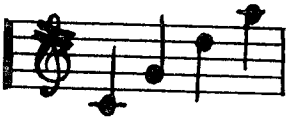
Seated in front of the director is the mandola section. The full name of the instrument is tenor mandola and, as the name indicates, it plays the tenor part. No part in the mandolin orchestra is more interesting, teeming with counter themes; occasionally playing several measures of solo, and again in obligato, the tenor mandola is indeed one of the gems of plectral instrumentation. Students should not compare either the instrument or its part with the viola of the standard orchestra. Although strung and tuned alike, except for the feature of steel double strings, the instruments are in no way comparable. Often the mandola is given a passage in double stops which, for body and sombre richness, cannot be described. The director should listen carefully for the mandola voice, and he will find that it is a great favorite with audiences, if skillfully featured.

Many directors curtail on their mandola sections but, to me, it is far too important to be treated lightly. I can think of several numbers which would scarcely receive any applause were it not for the mandola. Everyone delights in hearing a

well-balanced chorus, but how quickly would we criticize were the tenor section weak, yet it is not uncommon to hear a mandolin orchestra with a miserably weak mandola section and sometimes we hear of a mandolin orchestra with no mandolas at all! Fancy a mandolin string choir with no tenor voice! I would earnestly exhort all directors to consider the tenor mandola seriously, for within it lies much of the "filling" of your orchestra. No instrument can take its place for binding together the first and second mandolins *en masse,* with the mando-cellos. Without a mandola section the mandolin orchestra is like a strawberry shortcake without the berries—the "filling."

THE MANDO-CELLO
(Pronounced Mando-chello)

Mando-cello
Open strings.
Universal Notation.



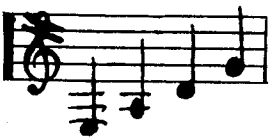
Both as a solo instrument and as the baritone "voice" of the mandolin-family choir, the mando-cello stands almost unapproachable. The instrument which is correctly called *mandoloncello* corresponds to the violoncello of the standard strings; therefore, its possibilities will be apparent to anyone conversant with standard orchestration. It is in counter themes and in solo, with orchestra accompaniment, that this instrument is shown to the best advantage. In the former it plaintively appeals, and is not unlike its half-brother the violoncello in depth and sonority of tone, but with a shimmering quality entirely peculiar to itself. Many conductors make the lamentable mistake of using the mando-cello entirely for foundation and body and while it should unquestionably be used in this way, to a certain extent, its own peculiar charm in counter melodies and solo should not be overlooked. The writer has found it unusually well adapted in solo parts, when accompanied by the entire orchestra. By this I do not mean that all of the cello section play a solo part in unison. The first chair 'cellist is usually the soloist and his chair is placed facing

the audience, beside the director's platform. In this position he plays his solo, the entire orchestra accompanying him. It invariably proves an interesting diversion from cut and dried orchestration, and is usually appreciated by an audience.

I would caution directors against using too many mando-cellos. The instrument is powerful, and if the first mandolin section be weak, several mando-cellos easily overbalance it. It is impossible to give the exact number which may be properly used for various combinations, inasmuch as players differ so greatly in volume and sonority. It is the director's business to listen to the minute effects which his orchestra is producing, and the mando-cellos will bear watching.

THE MANDO-BASS

Mando-bass
Open strings.
Universal Notation.



In writing of the mando-bass, no description is so all-inclusive as the slogan "the Colossus of tonal power in the mandolin orchestra."

This is the instrument to use for the tonal foundation of the mandolin orchestra, for guitar, cembalo or piano pale into insignificance when used in the same capacity beside the mando-bass. This instrument is built for foundation work, and I earnestly advise every conductor to procure a mando-bass, at the earliest possible moment. No mandolin orchestra is complete without one bass, **at least,** and I believe that, if possible, the perfect orchestra will feature one bass for every fifteen players. Considerable discussion has arisen concerning the possibility of tremolo on the mando-bass. One thing may be definitely stated in this regard, that tremolo is both possible and practical, but only *leather or fibre picks should be used.*

The matter of position for holding the bass has also been discussed. I believe that to facilitate execution the bass should be held with the pin placed in the hole at "G" side of the in-

strument and not placed in the end hole similarly to a string bass. I have been fortunate in having several excellent bass players in my orchestras from time to time, and all of them have played the instrument with the end pin in the former position.

I recommend a free wrist tremolo, with a forty-five degree attack, so that the plectrum will **brush** the string. In waltzes and marches, the accented beat or beats, are best executed with single strokes and directors should insist that tremolo be omitted.

AGAIN, LET ME REITERATE, SECURE A BASS AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE MOMENT. IT IS A REAL NECESSITY TO THE SUCCESS OF THE MANDOLIN ORCHESTRA.

The mando-bass completes the mandolin quintet, and the five instruments already described, when used together, are particularly effective, but it should be remembered that a combination of this type is a string ensemble and not an orchestra.

THE GUITAR

For centuries the guitar has been considered the ideal accompaniment for the mandolin; and for mandolin solo, and very small ensemble, it **is** quite ideal. In the large mandolin orchestra, I do not recommend too many guitars. I have experimented with guitars in various combinations, and when used judiciously, they produce an effect peculiarly plectral in atmosphere and happily reminiscent of troubadour music. It cannot be questioned that the guitar is eminently fitted as an accompanying instrument, but the director must watch carefully, or the guitar section will over-do its part; this at least has been my experience. The harp guitar is preferred whenever possible.

Insist that the accompaniment be light and etherial in quality and above all, refuse to tolerate thumb picks. A guitarist, armed with a thumb pick and steel strings, is bound to be the nemesis of any mandolin orchestra he may enter, but the guitarist who is willing to play musically, as the director wishes, is a joy forever.

A guitar section is highly important, but it must be directed

with careful discrimination. Directors should **not** attempt the old-fashioned club formation, with only mandolins and guitars. The club is now a relic of bygone days; show your progressiveness by organizing an *orchestra* with balanced instrumentation.

THE HARP-GUITAR

As an instrument, particularly fitted to the requirements of good plectral ensemble, I believe that the harp-guitar surpasses the regular guitar in every respect. Greater volume, coupled with the resonant sub-bass strings, gives this instrument a carrying power which will send a thrill over any audience when height of crescendo is desired. Its use, in the mandolin orchestra, is practically the same as the standard guitar.

THE BANJO

The mere name banjo seems to be a signal for derision in many so-called musical circles, and while the writer cannot claim to be a banjo devotee, he intends to be broad-minded enough to acknowledge that the instrument is not utterly lacking in good points, for he who has not been spellbound at Alfred A. Farland's exposition of *finger* banjo playing, would indeed be prejudiced. That the banjo has really good possibilities there is no doubt, and characteristic banjo music is clever, when played "banjoistically" by such men as Bacon, Ossman or Van Epps.

For years I was firm in the belief that the banjo was only interesting in solo, and I considered it almost an intrusion, when introduced as an instrument of the mandolin orchestra, but some years ago I listened to a number, given at one of the Boston Festival Orchestra concerts under the skillful direction of Messrs. Odell and Lansing, in which the banjos of Mr. Lansing's orchestra were featured. The effect under Lansing's skillful direction was a revelation to me, and I concluded that the banjo is not at fault, but rather the players who abuse it.

Never allow a steel string banjo in a mandolin orchestra. Furthermore, except in solo or obligato, never allow the banjo to become so prominent that it "plunks."

If your banjoists play with a plectrum, insist that they use leather. The finger playing is more desirable, however. In featuring, as a solo of **several measures,** allow the full characteristic banjo tone to predominate. It is spicy, and pleases the audience.

The banjo has been hurt immeasurab'y by the vicious performances of many of the vaudeville players, who attack the instrument with a shell pick, scraping over the heavy wire strings with a resulting noise that only a boiler factory can eclipse. I sincerely trust that our magazines will discourage these vaudevillians and refrain from giving them prominence or notice in their columns for they not only harm the banjo, but they disgrace the entire B. M. G. fraternity.

The banjo has a rightful place in the mandolin orchestra taking obligato parts and, when used with intelligence, splendid effects can be secured.

My experience has proven that one banjo to every fifteen or twenty mandolins is sufficient.

THE HARP AND IRISH-HARP

As an all inclusive adjunct to the mandolin orchestra, the harp stands unique. It can be used to strengthen the melody of the mandolins, simultaneously assisting the guitars; it may occupy the position of a complete string orchestra of eight parts, by itself; augmenting every instrument of the string section, or it can ripple the daintiest, filmiest obligato of arpeggii or glissandi, rising in crescendo and falling in diminuendo, in a dazzling, technical display that will thrill the soul of any musical director. It is the instrument par excellence for embellishment and supplementary tonal mass, and an orchestra of ten pieces augmented by a harp is unquestionably equal in volume to an organization of fifteen players. In the matter of overtones, however, the harp is a bad offender and I do not recommend the **large concert** harp for an orchestra of less than thirty-five players, but in an organization of this size the concert harp, judiciously handled, is a gem.

At this writing, the mandolin orchestra has a harp created for its especial benefit, the Clark Irish Harp. This little in-

strument has all the advantages of the large concert harp, but the **short string** length overcomes the overtone nuisance and gives us the ideal harp for the mandolin orchestra. The quality is harplike in every particular and all of the effects common to the large harp, may be reproduced yet all within the tonal limit of the mandolin orchestra. Inexpensive, portable, a thoroughbred harp, we are indeed fortunate in having this little instrument made for our especial benefit. It may safely be used in either large or small ensemble. Parts are now being published for the Irish harp in mandolin orchestration.

THE HUNGARIAN CEMBALO

While the Hungarian Cembalo can scarcely be termed an instrument of the mandolin orchestra, nevertheless I feel that it deserves mention in passing. The instrument is somewhat akin to the dulcimer, but much larger and more inclusive. The tone quality blends wonderfully with the plectral instruments, and when used alone in introductory passages and the like it is decidedly unique and effective. Cembalo players are rare, indeed, but the instrument is not difficult to learn for mandolin orchestra work, and in either large or small organizations it may be used to advantage.

MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUMENTS

Within recent years the steel guitar, and uku'ele have been used in mandolin orchestras, but the writer does not consider either instrument serious enough to justify it a legitimate place in the mandolin orchestra.

I have seen many directors bolster a weak section with one of the bowed instruments. I have no patience with this procedure and heartily disapprove of mixing bowed and plectral instruments. The diversity of the amplitude of vibrations in the two types of instruments absolutely prevents the musical blending of tone color, and a director with a highly trained ear and sensitive temperament will never resort to such inferior methods. We all realize the almost unapproachable heights to which the standard bowed orchestra has climbed, and we look with admiration upon the great symphony, but to use many of the heavy orchestral instruments in the fairy-

like mandolin orchestra is but suicide to the organization. We have a complete string quintet of our own mandolin family, and there is no reason why we should be obliged to ask for outside assistance. I feel that every director should take pride enough in his part of the making of plectral history, to present his orchestra as a strictly plectral organization.

THE PIANO

For the weak and struggling orchestra the piano comes as a "very present help in time of trouble" and well played it will cover a multitude of sins. However, when the piano is used, it must be played with extreme care and used only as a background. Everything considered, I much prefer the guitar and harp-guitar when used intelligently, while the Irish harp is infinitely better than the piano.

THE WOOD-WINDS

In an orchestra of twelve or more players, a flute is delightful. Doubling the melody or in brilliant obligato it is a distinct relief from the all-string quality. Almost all the modern mandolin orchestrations feature flute parts, and any director will do well to add the flute to his organization as soon as possible.

The director should exercise great care when calling for volume from the flute section in a large orchestra. The instrument is penetrating and shrill in the higher register and amateur flute players are inclined to force and often "blow sharp."

In a large orchestra the clarinet is a gem. The wonderful scales and trills which are possible on this instrument make a fanciful setting against the plectral instruments. In orchestras of less than twenty the clarinet is not practical.

The oboe, as everyone familiar with instrumentation knows, is an instrument which is effective only in the hands of an artist. That it can be used to great advantage in the mandolin orchestra there is no doubt, but the orchestra must be a large one with a pretentious repertoire. F. Landry Berthoud, the director of the Serenaders' Orchestra of New York City, proved beyond all possible doubt at the American Guild Concert given under his direction in Aeolian Hall in 1913, that

the oboe is an instrument for the mandolin orchestra. Unless a director is well experienced and a thorough musician, I would not advise the use of the oboe.

There is but little to be said regarding the use of the bassoon in the mandolin orchestra. In a mammoth organization it fills in well, but the tone quality in my opinion, is not particularly well suited to the plectral instruments. The first time I heard the bassoon used in a mandolin orchestra was at a concert given by Geo. L. Lansing's organization in Chickering Hall, Boston. At that time the Lansing orchestra was not as fully instrumentated as it is now, and the bassoon filled many a gap. Generally speaking, however, I do not recommend the instrument too heartily.

BRASS INSTRUMENTS

On several occasions I have heard the cornet used in mandolin ensemble, but I have yet to listen to anything musical in such a performance. Perhaps a cornet virtuoso, who could keep the instrument at a pianissimo tone value, might add somewhat to the tonal mass of mandolin ensemble, but to place a cornetist in the average mandolin orchestra is like playing with fire—one never knows when it may break out and envelope everything nearby. If you have a good mandolin orchestra of medium proportions and are considering the addition of a cornet, better leave well enough alone.

All that has been said of the cornet is equally applicable to the trombone.

The French horn, although a brass instrument, produces an entirely different effect in the mandolin orchestra than does either the cornet or trombone. There is a sombre richness in the tone quality of the horns, which blends pleasantly with the light plectral quality. I must add, however, that the horn player should be an expert and the director should watch him carefully. One French horn to every twenty-five players is sufficient.

PERCUSSION

Snare and bass drums are a necessary adjunct to every mandolin orchestra, but *THEY MUST NOT BE USED INCESSANTLY*. Drummers are, usually, the most jolly, likable

chaps in the music business but their great failing is to be eternally drumming. This cannot be tolerated in a mandolin orchestra. Drums may be used successfully in numbers where rhythmic precision is desired, and for dance music the instruments are treated exactly as in the regular string orchestra. I have found that a drum, made from a banjo rim, is superior for plectral ensemble. It is bright and snappy and never becomes tubby, or monotonous.

In large mandolin orchestras, the tympani are a great addition. These instruments, sometimes called kettle-drums, are tuned to the key in which the composition is written. Usually the tonic and dominant are the tones which are chosen. Any drummer, who has had experience with snare and bass drums, can operate tympani successfully for mandolin orchestra work.

TRAPS, XYLOPHONE, ETC.

Descriptive selections always please an audience, and it is well to feature at least one on every program. This gives an opportunity for the drummer to introduce various traps, at his discretion. In our particular line, I do not consider the heavy traps particularly effective. The use of traps, however, is largely a matter of taste and consequently I shall not discuss the matter at length.

THE MANDOLIN BANJO

Perhaps the reader may have noticed that I have made no mention of the mandolin-banjo and its kin, in connection with the mandolin orchestra.

The purpose of this book is to enlighten the public upon the inner workings of the *concert mandolin orchestra* and, believing as I do, that the mandolin-banjo has no place in concert mandolin ensemble, I have not included it.

I believe that the good old fashioned gut string banjo, played either with the plectrum or the fingers, can be made a musical adjunct to our ensemble and that it has its rightful place in music, regardless of the abuse it has received, but to me the mandolin-banjo is neither a mandolin nor a banjo and I do not think that its tone quality adds anything musical to our orchestras. Therefore, I say in all seriousness that I sincerely hope directors will refrain from using it. As a dance

instrument it undoubtedly has possibilities. The dance orchestra is its field, there let us hope it may remain.

PLECTRAL SECTION CONSIDERED COLLECTIVELY

As I have already stated in the preface, I am writing as a free lance. Whatever I have stated expresses my convictions at this date. I believe, that to secure the best possible balance with the mandolin family, that the instruments, when in the hands of amateurs, should be of *one make* and I heartily recommend the "Gibson" construction to leaders and teachers. A professional can produce good results with almost any instrument, but in amateur organizations I believe that one make will produce a more uniform tone quality.

In organizing a mandolin orchestra I would suggest that the director communicate with the Gibson Mandolin-Guitar Company of Kalamazoo, Mich., and endeavor to equip all of his players uniformly, at the outset. This obviates trouble at the beginning. The Gibson Company can furnish mandolins, mandolas, mando-cellos, mando-basses, guitars and harp-guitars. The Clark Harp Company of Syracuse are the manufacturers of the Clark Irish Harp which has been marketed expressly for mandolin orchestra work and Lyon & Healy of Chicago can give quotations on the concert harp. I have mentioned these firms, because I know that the instruments they produce are as good as money can buy.

Directors should insist upon good instruments, and remember that uniformity of appearance is of the utmost importance.

It is not necessary to pay cash for any of the instruments needed in the mandolin orchestra, for all of the large manufacturers will accept payments from responsible parties.

Remember that good instruments are paramount.

CHAPTER IV

Directing the Mandolin Orchestra

THE duties of any musical director are indeed, manifold; he receives both criticism and praise; and, being in absolute control of the orchestra, he can make the organization good or bad according to his ability. First of all, he must know every selection the orchestra plays and he must understand every part. If one player, in any section, plays a wrong note he should be able to detect it instantly. A musical director should not tolerate any levity during rehearsals. It has been my experience that the more stern a director, the better his orchestra. Consider the organization as though composed of one man sections. Insist that the members of each section play *absolutely together,* using the same fingering and stroking, for uniformity in appearance goes a long way toward impressing an audience.

Never speak to, or correct, an individual, if it can possibly be avoided. You may "rave" at a section mercilessly until everyone knows where the error lies and the individual will not be offended, but when a director of an *amateur* organization indulges in personalities, trouble begins. Professional orchestras expect individual criticism and the members, being paid for their work, are forced to accept bits of sarcasm from the director but the average mandolin orchestra is an amateur one and the members play for pleasure, therefore, it will not pay to offend them individually. A little tact is all that is necessary.

Another matter I wish to caution directors against, is the discussion of the merits of the various players in his orches-

tra, outside of rehearsals. Having accepted them into his orchestra, it is to be understood that they are all upon an equal basis, the concert meister excepted. As I have said before, leaders of each section may be appointed, but this should be done for the purpose of placing responsibility, and not for the sake of creating honorary positions.

RESPECT DUE DIRECTOR

A director should never tolerate nor consider a suggestion given by a member of the orchestra during a rehearsal. By so doing a leader loses both prestige and power. He has been selected to direct the orchestra because he was considered the best musician available and no one should presume to offer criticism or suggestion. Of course a private suggestion apart from rehearsal is perfectly proper but that should be given in a spirit of friend to friend. During rehearsal the director is the master, and his word is absolute law. If he isn't capable, get a new director, but never criticize him.

With the orchestra seated, each member equipped with a new instrument, and with the director standing, baton in hand, the rehearsal may begin.

In ensemble of any kind, one of the most important points is uniformity of attack. A great many hours of patient practice will be required to make the players begin exactly together but it can be accomplished no matter how large the orchestra. This one item must be rehearsed until the players are as one. In the mandolin quintet, every wrist must be arched ready to attack, when the baton goes down and every plectrum should swing exactly alike. I cannot emphasize this point too strongly.

TIME BEATING

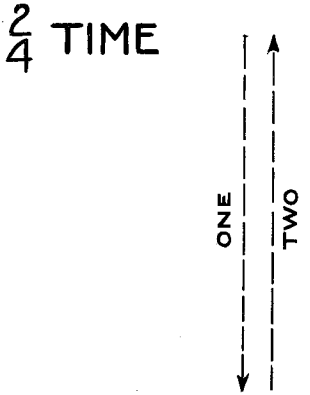
The first beat of every measure is *always a down beat.* To illustrate clearly and concisely I have prepared the following diagrams illustrating the various kinds of time and the correct method of beating them.

Every director attains a certain individuality in time beating, but a certain form MUST be observed.

Directing is in itself an art and the would-be conductor

will do well to practice before a mirror. Every gesture should have its own meaning and should produce a definite result. The left hand should be used occasionally but always for a definite purpose. I often extend my left hand with the palm toward the orchestra for subdued passages and usually "call" the second mandolins, mandolas, mandocellos, mando-basses and harps with that hand when special emphasis is required by these instruments.

2/4 time. First beat down, second beat up, in fast movements. In slow movements, 2/4 time may be considered as 4/8 time, re-



quiring four beats to the measure same as beating 4/4 or common time. Slow movement, first beat down; second beat, to the left; third beat, to the right; and fourth beat up.

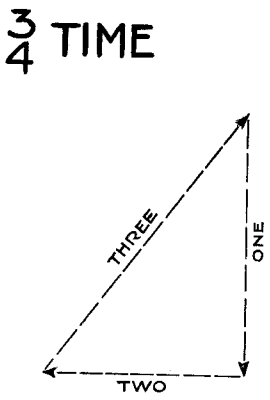
3/4 time. First beat, down; second beat, left; third beat, obliquely up, except in fast waltz time, when only the first count is beaten.

4/4 or common time. First beat, down; second beat, to the left; third beat, to the right; fourth beat up. In slow movements consider as 8/8 time, beating as per 4/4, i. e., two 4/4 measures of beating for every measure considered as 8/8, making the down stroke on each primary accent.

3/8 time. Beaten the same as slow 3/4 time.

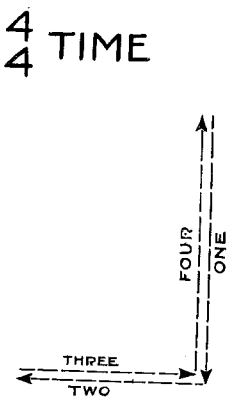
6/8 time. Beat exactly as 2/4 time, except in largo or andante

movements, when each count receives one beat, following the form of ¾ beating. In beating fast ⅝ time, the first *three* counts



are given *one down beat;* second *three* counts receive *one up beat.*

⅝ time. In fast movements this time is beaten the same as slow ¾ movements. In slow tempo consider each ⅝ measure



as three measures of ⅜, beating as per diagram of slow ¾ time.

12/8 time. In quick movements, one measure of 12/8 time is

beaten the same as two measures of quick 6/8 time, but in slow tempo, the style is the same as 3/8, slow movement, using as it were, four measures of 3/8 slow movement to one measure of 12/8 slow movement, always reserving down beats on regular accents.

When a selection starts on another beat than the first, the up beat is generally employed. The director must take care in selecting the proper form of beating, so as not to confuse the players.

Any form of "2" time is indicated by two beats; one down, the other, up. (2/2—2/4—2/8.)

Any form of "3" time receives three beats; down, left, up. (3/2—3/4—3/8.)

Any form of "4" time receives four beats; down, left, right up. (4/2—4/4 or C—4/8.)

The reader, having gained a fair knowledge of time beating, by study of the foregoing illustrations, I will continue the subject of directing by discussing briefly the most common effects used in musical ensemble.

THE CRESCENDO

One of the greatest orchestral effects is the long crescendo, and while the mandolin orchestra cannot equal the standard orchestra in point of fortissimo climax, nevertheless, the zephyr-like quality of the plectral instruments is fully as appealing.

Crescendos, whether long or short, should increase gradually and *not grow louder in spots; insist that each note within a crescendo be treated as a tiny crescendo itself*—each succeeding note, beginning with a trifle warmer tone value than the note previously played. Crescendos are well worthy of great practice. They are common, it is true, but they are always an indication of good training when well done.

THE DIMINUENDO

There is little to be said regarding the execution of the diminuendo except that the process of crescendo playing be reversed.

THE LEGATO

Common as is the legato, I nevertheless, believe that it is

less understood than any effect in mandolin playing. In the the first place, let me say emphatically that *legato does not necessarily mean tremolo.* The tremolo is merely a means of sustaining a tone, through a given period of time. The term "legato" means "to connect" and musical tones may be connected to one another quite as well with single strokes provided their time value does not exceed their vibration period of clearly defined resonance.

A legato phrase, which contains notes of time value too long to vibrate their required time limit, should be played tremolo, and there should be no perceptible break in tremolo between the notes.

A legato phrase, which contains notes of brief time value, should be played with alternate strokes, when possible, but in changing strings, when moving in an upward direction, the glide may be used. In order to produce a perfect legato, the fingers of the left hand producing the notes, must be kept down as long as possible. Tiny matters of this nature assume vast proportions when magnified by forty or more players, and the successful director must continually repeat difficult passages to secure uniformity.

THE STACCATO

One of the most unique effects which can be produced on the plectral instruments is the staccato, but again, in this effect, we are obliged to adhere rigidly to detail and minute attack.

Staccato notes must always be executed with a down stroke and as soon as the string has been struck with the plectrum, the finger of the left hand producing the note, stops pressing upon the finger board. This stops all vibration instantly, and the result is a short, clean cut tone, essentially staccato, in every sense of the word. The finger of the left hand producing the note must **not be lifted from the string;** *merely stop the pressure.* The plectrum must strike *both* strings for every note and the director should insist that this be done. By listening carefully, if one or two players are striking but one string, it can be easily detected. Staccato passages require a great deal of patient practice and every wrist must work exactly

alike and every left hand finger must release the pressure simultaneously.

To the uninitiated, many of these explanations may seem detailed to the point of fanaticism, but I can assure my readers that attention to details is the most important factor in successful plectral ensemble.

In many of the classics, we find legato phrases balanced by staccato phrases and, in first violin parts staccato and legato are intermingled continually and often so intricately, as to appear a veritable puzzle to the amateur. It is in these instances, which require skill in execution, that well trained ensemble is effective. It is indeed a symmetrical display when thirty or forty players execute one of these intricate passages; every wrist moving with the precision of a machine, and the *musical* results in these passages of contrast are delightful.

THE RITARD

The variation of time in accelerando and ritard is difficult for the average amateur orchestra to acquire, and until the organization becomes exceedingly proficient and accustomed to the variable temperament of the director, ritards and accelerandos should be *counted aloud* at rehearsals. The director should *continue to beat the time* while counting, however, for the players must learn to follow the beat. The professional orchestra player will read the most difficult music at sight and follow the director's baton as accurately as though he were attached thereto. A conductor should explain carefully to amateurs exactly what is done in the professional organizations, that they may set a standard for themselves, and hitch their orchestra wagon to a star! With several hundred mandolin orchestras throughout the country, with lofty ideals, the time is not far distant when an immense professional organization will find it profitable to tour this country.

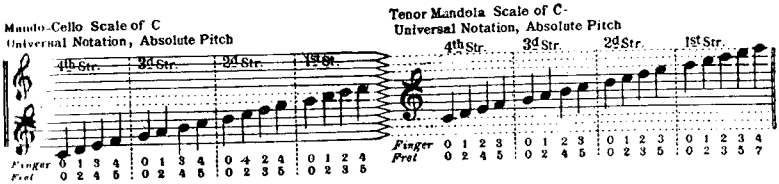
Wonderful results may be achieved in an amateur way; even most professional organizations had a humble beginning. As an illustration of the amateur becoming professional, Webber's Melody Phiends, formerly Webber's Juvenile Mandolin Orchestra of Portland, Oregon is unique. The organization is composed entirely of young folks trained since childhood by Mr.

Webber and from the standpoint of precision and accuracy, it is unquestionably the best mandolin orchestra this country has produced. They have been touring in vaudeville, and while their offerings are of necessity of the type calculated to please the theatre-going public, the general ensemble will open the eyes of many an amateur organization. It is a pity that these talented players cannot feature more of the classics in their programs, for the writer heard them in private recital in which they rendered several standard overtures in a manner that both surprised and delighted him.

CHAPTER V

Notation in Plectral Orchestration

EVERY director should have a knowledge of the rudimentary points of orchestration, and be conversant upon the subject of notation.



Never in the history of our instruments, has the B. M. G. fraternity been so aroused, as in the notation discussion which has just ended. The result is, that Universal Notation has been permanently adopted for the mandola, mando-cello, mando-bass, guitar and banjo, and we are possessing the unique distinction of originating a notation for ourselves; a notation which is both simple to learn and practical in result and is unfettered by tradition or precedent. For the benefit of my readers, I have illustrated the great staff in Universal Notation. It will be plain to any music student that this notation gives a uniform clef reading in the bass, tenor and treble clefs, and a student who has once mastered the treb'e reading has accomplished a three-fold result. The simple G clef sign indicates treble clef exactly as it has always been used. When one bar is placed across the stem it is an indication of tenor clef and the notes sound

one octave lower than when placed in the same position of the staff following the treble sign. With two bars across the stem

Treble Clef

Tenor Clef

Bass Clef

of the clef sign the bass clef is indicated, and the notes when played sound *two octaves lower* than when in the same position of the staff in treble clef and *one octave lower* than tenor clef. It is evident, therefore, that universal notation gives us three clefs; bass, tenor and treble, *all with the same reading* and exactly one octave apart. The simplicity of such a scheme is wonderful and the entire system can be grasped by a child almost immediately. For example: we learn that the third space is C. If we wish to find which C is indicated we need only to look at the clef sign, and our little bars will tell the story.

I firmly believe that the time will come when the world will do honor to L. A. Williams, the father of Universal Notation.

TRANSPOSED NOTATION A FAILURE

I could explain in detail the shortcomings of the old fashioned transposed notation, or point out many ways in which the standard alto clef is inferior, but why discuss the negative side of a subject. Universal Notation and the mandola and mando-cello are synonymous; the American Guild has adopted it and we who have used it know that it is the most practical notation for our instruments.

Realizing, however, that a great deal of music has been published for both the mandola and mando-cello in transposed notation, I am giving a list of the keys in which a first mandolin part may be written with the key in which the mandola and mando-cello will appear in transposed notation. It will, of course, be understood that in Universal Notation, all of the string instruments *play in the same key.* The list which follows, while appended for the convenience of the new director, is in reality strong testimony against transposed notation.

First Mandolin	*Mandola and Mando-cello*
Natural	One sharp
One sharp	Two sharps
Two sharps	Three sharps
Three sharps	Four sharps
Four sharps	Five sharps
Five sharps	Six sharps
Six sharps	Seven sharps
One flat	Natural
Two flats	One flat
Three flats	Two flats
Four flats	Three flats
Five flats	Four flats
Six flats	Five Flats
Seven Flats	Six flats

KNOWLEDGE OF NOTATIONS NECESSARY

Inasmuch, as many of the wind instruments of the standard orchestra have dealt entirely with notations requiring a diversity of clef readings for many years, it would be both foolhardy and presuming for us to issue parts for these instruments in Universal Notation when used in mandolin orchestra, and until the musical world in general grasps the full importance of this new reform—which I fear will be many years—it is best that parts for the instruments referred to be left in the clefs which have been used for years. It will be evident, from this, that a director must have at least, a rudimentary knowledge of the standard clefs, but even though the "shortest distance between two points is a straight line" the man who takes a roundabout route gains more experience. Therefore, he who studies the methods of those who have been great, almost to the point of being unapproachable, can lose nothing and can gain infinitely; for genius, even though manacled by precedent, gives food for thought to those who are not gifted in the reflection of a particular phase of the Infinite Mind.

B. M. G. TEACHER TAKES STAND

It has taken courage for the B. M. G. teacher and director to take his stand against the whole world of musicians, a large

percentage of whom are far more skilled and greater students of the methods of the past than he can ever hope to be, but whether or not he lives to see the day in which he is not looked upon as a presuming visionary, he can at least leave this plane of existence, with the satisfaction of knowing that he has stood steadfastly for a cause that was founded on truth.

I would suggest that the director of a mandolin orchestra form a string quartet, and after exhausting the literature which has already been published for this combination, take up the study of the string quartets of the old masters. By familiarizing himself with every part he will acquire a knowledge of all the standard clefs and as probably ninety-nine and eight-ninths per cent. of all of the world's greatest music is now written in this way, the necessity for at least a superficial knowledge of this notation will be apparent to the zealous musical student-director.

In our progressive rush toward the improvement of to-day, we cannot afford to overlook the great, of yesterday, so long as that great shall contain the inspiration of genius which may never again be duplicated. To be progressive should be the ambition of every director, but in our aim toward progression we must not let egotism blind us to the great achievements of the past, many of which stand as a perpetual monument to the memory of those men, who loved their art for art's sake, and were not driven by the lash of the almighty dollar.

CHAPTER VI

The Repertoire of the Mandolin Orchestra

LOCALITY, mental development and social standing of the players, coupled with the musical status of the community, must play important parts in the building of a repertoire.

The first rule that a conductor should learn so thoroughly that it must never be lost sight of is: *Never attempt more than your organization can do well.* To program a difficult overture and then "murder" it, is not only poor advertising for the orchestra itself, but it is unfair to the cause in general to localize unfavorable opinion of the fretted instruments. Simple numbers *well* played are far more interesting than great numbers poorly executed, and it is always well to remember that there may be one well-read musician in the audience.

In making a repertoire it is well to begin with slow numbers, and something well known which always interests the players. Do not work continually for technical stunts. Remember *you are directing a musical organization.* Study the tiny phraselets, the long sentences or the paragraphs in every composition you undertake, and endeavor to convey to the audience the ideas which the composer intended to bring out. I have heard many an orchestra—the criticism is not restricted to mandolin orchestras—interpret numbers which had I not known to the contrary, I should have believed the compositions written by a brainless would-be.

It is a crime against the name of a composer to rush through a composition, with the speed of a transcontinental "limited," without giving the least attention to the essentials of musical

interpretation, with which every well written page of music is literally covered.

ALL MARKS HAVE MEANING

Mr. Odell, whom the writer considers one of the greatest conductors he has ever known in the mandolin orchestra world, says in his book on the Mandolin Orchestra:

"There are usually three marks on a page that do not concern a player: first, the number of the page; second, the publisher's name, if given; third, the publisher's plate number which is usually printed at the very bottom of the page."

The foregoing statement will forcibly indicate the necessity of giving every mark minute attention, and again let me emphasize the importance of phrase marks. Phrasing in music, is like punctuation in literature, and serves as the guide posts of inflection and accent. Study, carefully every tiny detail which will heighten an effect, and make the most of every opportunity. From forte to piano, fortissimo to double piano and vice versa, and other similar effects of contrast in both tonal color and tempo, should all be executed with a definite purpose and clearly defined understanding.

As a director you are giving your musical knowledge an "airing" every time your orchestra plays in public. You are showing *your* ability, for it is you who have trained the players and it is your ideas that are being carried out. Remember that "Thomas Jones, Conductor" on the program makes him responsible for everything, in fact quite as much so as though a solo were programmed instead of an orchestra number.

WALTZ FORM EASILY MASTERED

For the first three rehearsals it is well to select three simple numbers. Start the rehearsals with a waltz, for the waltz form is the easiest to master. Begin with the first mandolins, and go through the orchestra, having each section play its own part *alone* until it is perfect from a mechanical standpoint. The parts may then be played together.

In difficult numbers, I often have the various sections go through their parts separately and then, beginning with the first and second mandolins, I go through the entire composition adding a new section each time we go over it. Of course in

this way the first mandolins get more practice than the other sections, but it never does them harm, to say the least, and I find that all the players get a far better idea of the musical construction of the selection together with a general knowledge of each part. It has been my experience, that in order to obtain uniform "sympathy" between players and a director, the director must explain not only what he is trying to bring out but *why*. No one cares to be lead blindly, and if the director will explain his reasons and use gestures corresponding to the requirements of his mood, he will find after a few weeks of practice, that his orchestra will understand him almost intuitively.

After mastering a simple waltz, a march and a schottische, it is time to turn your attention toward something of greater merit.

An excellent number to attempt at this point is Nevin's Rosary, published by the Boston Music Co. The melody is familiar and pleases the players, and it makes a wonderful mandolin orchestra number. After this number has been mastered the director should select several more which are a little more difficult.

Do not spend more than forty-five minutes rehearsing one selection during an evening. Remember that you are dealing with amateurs who are playing for pleasure and too much repetition becomes monotonous. The successful mandolin orchestra conductor will study his players, and by judicious encouragement, a great deal of work can be obtained by the Tom Sawyer plan of fence white-washing made famous by Mark Twain.

A whole volume could be written upon the subject of interpretation and "the half would not be told," but by attending the best orchestra concerts given in his vicinity, the director can gain many an idea which can be applied to the mandolin orchestra. He should also make an effort to attend every symphony concert possib'e, even though it necessitates a trip of several hundred miles, for the several symphony orchestras now before the American public are models of musical development—the products of master musical minds.

BUILDING A PROGRAM

Again, locality and musical education of an audience play

an important part in the art of program building. It is quite as foolhardy to program "The Lost Chord" at a lodge smoker, as it would be to feature the latest "rag" at a music teacher's convention; therefore the director's good judgment must again be resorted to.

Regardless of their educational advantages, human beings are pretty much the same, unless they be over-specialized geniuses in which case nothing ever suits them; and it is safe to presume that almost any audience craves variety. Always begin with the most sombre number which you intend to use. There are always many uneducated ones who want something bright, and often this class is in the majority, and it is well to have them *leave* in a pleasant frame of mind. I do not wish it understood that I favor using *all* of the slower numbers at the beginning, but if there is any one number which you feel is really too deep for the majority of your listeners by all means play it first, and descend to the level which will be popular.

One should be careful not to use too many compositions of one type or of one composer on a program. For example, more than two marches, three waltzes, etc., become tiresome by reason of their similar construction. In a general, miscellaneous program endeavor to feature all the more popular forms of composition. A bright march, a dreamy waltz, a sparkling schottische with here and there an old time melody arranged for solo with orchestra accompaniment.

In schools, which teach the art of magic the first rule which the young presdidigitateur is taught, is never to repeat a trick, no matter how much it may have pleased the audience, and generally speaking, I believe this an excellent rule in concert work. When an audience applauds it is a sign of pleasure, and it *may* be interpreted that a repeat of the number played is desired, but whichever way the conductor may wish to interpret the compliment paid him, I do not believe that it is advisable to repeat *even a chorus* for an encore. The magician says, "A good trick loses half its mystery upon repetition" and a well rendered selection certainly loses half its charm, when similarly treated.

ENCORES FREQUENTLY AVOIDED

It is perfectly permissible after arranging a program with

due care and attention to variety and balance, to place a footnote at the end asking the audience to refrain from insisting upon encores. I know that this is rarely done, but a long drawn out concert filled with encores and curtain calls is tiresome even to the most musical.

On one occasion, when the writer was soloist for one of the large mandolin orchestras in an eastern city, the director had arranged a program for the purpose of exploiting the possibilities of the mandolin family. He feared that if separated with encores, the continuity of the musical story which he was endeavoring to tell would be broken, and at the bottom of the program he appended the following footnote:

"This program has been arranged with an effort to present the development of plectral literature, and much time has been spent in an endeavor to maintain an interesting progression; encores, therefore must necessarily be omitted."

It served its purpose admirably. The audience applauded enthusiastically, but not insistently and the program was a model from an educational standpoint.

A few words in regard to rag-time may not be amiss. Like everyone who is living to do his share toward the elevation of any particular type of music, the writer abhors rag-time to an inexpressible degree and whatever the would-be advocate may say concerning the narrowness of the classicist, I cannot be broad enough to say that it appears to have any merit from my viewpoint, much less any kinship to musical composition. However, like many another evil, the public demands it, and therefore we are forced to give it some attention.

If "rag" must be used I heartily advise that it be restricted to short programs where encores are expected. A standard number followed by a rag selection answers very well, but the young director need not feel that he is dependent upon "rag" to make a hit for the old and ever popular classics are always welcome. *Use rag-time as sparingly as possible.* Even if you are a rag enthusiast remember, it will be more appreciated if used judiciously.

SOLOISTS PROVIDE VARIETY

Another point in the variety of program building is the solo-

ist. Never occupy the entire evening with an orchestra. It matters not how good it may be; large ensemble becomes tiresome without a change and for a concert, a soloist of some sort should be used. Not even the organ gives so fine a backing to the human voice as the mandolin orchestra. I have directed many orchestras for vocalists and all of them have pronounced the mandolin ensemble the ideal accompaniment. If the young director finds that it is too much of a tax upon his orchestra to accompany the singer in all the selections, it is quite permissible to feature one or two songs with orchestra accompaniment, and use piano or harp alone for the other accompaniments. This is particularly commendable for the sake of variety.

As I have said before, the arrangement of a program should be the work of the director, and he must take into consideration the conditions under which the concert is to be held, but for general work the following form may be used successfully.

"Deepest" number
Bright march
Soloist with or without orchestra
Waltz
Schottische
Overture
Soloist
Old time melodies
"Popular" if necessary
March

In mandolin orchestra playing, unless the organization be an old one with players who have had years of training in overtures, I much prefer to hear selections from the operas. These selections are usually easier than overtures, and yet have sufficient "character" to satisfy the most musical. An overture, poorly played, is a disastrous advertisement for our instruments, for the public has heard every one of the standards perfectly rendered by the conventional orchestra, and unless a conductor is prepared to give a correct rendition with his *mandolin* orchestra, overtures better not be attempted in public. It is an excellent plan, however, to rehearse on overtures, and

in time the organization will probably perform them creditably.

In closing this chapter on repertoire and program building, I would re-iterate: *Attempt what your players can execute well.* In building programs, study the environment in which your orchestra is to appear. By inquiry, you can easily learn the average musical and mental development of the members of the audience and **above all endeavor to please them;** they may need educating, but for your own sake and the sake of the instruments you represent, don't try to educate them with a mandolin orchestra. If you feel that your orchestra cannot please an audience refuse the date; if you feel that the music you play is either above or below the standard of a requirement refuse the date; remember it is always better to play occasionally and make a hit each time, than to play every evening and only please once in a while.

CHAPTER VII

Tone Production

THE subject of tone production is practically an inexhaustible one and the writer has already spent ten years of experimentation upon this particular branch, in connection with plectral music. ("The Theory of Plectral Tone Production" by Wm. Place, Jr., explains in detail the production of every kind of tone which can be produced with a plectrum.) To instruct an orchestra in the tiny intricacies of tone production, is a work of years, but the director, who is also the teacher of his orchestra members individually, can accomplish wonders. As I stated in the preface of this work, I have nothing to sell, nothing to advertise; but I say in all sincerity that clickless plectral tone production is impossible unless beveled fibre plectrums are used. (I will except the leather plectrum but the porousness of leather results in so light a tone that it is scarcely practical for ensemble work.) I earnestly advise directors to insist that their players use fibre plectrums. After listening to a number played with the ordinary shell, composition or hard rubber plectrums the contrast with fibre is most marked. In fact, it is almost unbelievable. The fibre plectrum produces a tone which in phonograph recording makes a cut exactly as deep as one of a hard substance, which proves that the tone value is equal; better still it produces little or no click, especially if handled by a player, who understands prepared tone and angle of contact.

IDEAL TONE BELL-LIKE

The ideal plectral ensemble tone is one of a shimmering bell-like quality, unmarred by a million little clicks that remind

one of hail on a tin roof. **The director who cannot detect click is too unmusical to be at the head of a mandolin orchestra** but even though we have been burdened with many of them in the past, the plectral instruments are now becoming so well developed that in order to keep pace with the plectral march of progress, a director must not only "know" music but he must listen intently for tone values.

Instruct your players to play in such a manner that they can always hear their right hand neighbors. Insist upon an angular attack on the strings of about 45° and, if possible, explain to your players the theory of tone preparation.

STUDY THE MANDO-CELLO

In the matter of plec-click, the mando-cellos are the worst offenders, and I would advise every director to give attention to his cello section in this regard.

Plectral instruments can be played MUSICALLY and without a trace of plec-click even in large ensemble. The standard of plectral music demands musical tone production and rightly so, for how can an instrument be considered musical if its music is mixed with noise?

Strive to obtain a clear, bell-like resonance, as pure as though the string were struck with the fingers. Impress upon each member of the orchestra that this is an individual duty, and the results will positively be gratifying.

CHAPTER VIII

Directing, Managing and Staging a Concert

TO give a successful concert is the ambition of every director for is he not "showing off his children?"

It is to be regretted that an audience has no comprehension of the hours of toil, which are necessary to produce a successful entertainment. If they could but know, perhaps we could expect more charitable criticisms. However, it is for our good that we have a stern press and caustic critics for it keeps our standards higher and will result in our instruments becoming as well thought of as those of the violin family.

HOW TO SELECT CONCERT HALL

The first step in staging a successful concert, after the orchestra has been sufficiently rehearsed, is the selection of a suitable hall. Of course, one is not always privileged to select an ideal auditorium, but when the concert is to be given by the orchestra members themselves, for the purpose of demonstrating the charms of the plectral instruments to the public, then an auditorium should be selected with the greatest care. It is difficult to judge the acoustic properties of a vacant hall, but by placing a mandolin player upon the platform with instructions to play lightly, the director may obtain a fair idea of the tone carrying qualities of the room.

STAGE DETAIL

Unless the orchestra is a large one, I do not advise the use of a theatre, but for a good-sized organization, an ordinary hall cannot compare with the theatre for background and general stage setting.

After the auditorium has been determined upon, the director

should select some responsible members of the orchestra to look after the various details. The concert-meister, as usual attends to the tuning, the librarian looks after the music and the placing of the chairs; and the stage manager is in complete charge of all other details. The latter should be given minute instructions by the director concerning the details of stage setting, curtain raising, etc. If the concert be given in a theatre, help for the manipulation of curtain, lighting etc. are always furnished by the management, but one of the orchestra members who is familiar with the program in hand should always act as stage manager.

CONCERT SEATING ARRANGEMENT

When no curtain is available, the members of the orchestra are obliged to file on the platform and take their seats. Regardless of the fact that celebrated symphony players maintain no system when entering, I believe that it is not only disrespectful to the audience, but savors unfavorably of inefficient organization and at best the players become a miscellaneous crowd instead of a highly developed organization.

Inasmuch, as we are endeavoring to give minute attention to musical details, I see no reason why we should not give the same attention to the details of appearance, therefore, I have always adopted the following plan which to me is abundantly satisfactory.

If the stage may be entered from both sides, I arrange the players in single file according to the chairs which they occupy. The first mandolins enter from the right of stage and are followed by the mando-cellos, mando-basses, one-half the guitar section and the pianist, in the order mentioned. From the left, enter the second mandolins, mandolas, wood winds, harps, brasses, if used, drums, tympani and miscellaneous instruments, and the remaining half of the guitar section. The terms "right" and "left" are used from the view point of the players as they sit facing the audience.

As the players enter, I consider it excellent form if they stand before their chairs until the concert-meister gives the signal to be seated, when all act together. The foregoing system of entrance is dignified and impressive and to me it seems

respectful to the audience. After the members are seated the director may enter at his pleasure and the concert begins.

CORRECT STAGE DRESS

The subject of stage dress brings us again to the subject of appearance which the reader has by this time learned goes very far toward making ensemble a success.

In plectral orchestras, we are blessed with an abundance of ladies, and as ladies and fashions are quite inseparable, we are face to face with a delicate subject. If possible, the most satisfactory attire for the ladies is plain white. Delicate hues are fetching upon the ball room floor, but not in a mandolin orchestra. Personally I would rather lose a good player than to have her appear in a gaudy outfit at a concert.

For the men nothing is permissible except full evening dress with *a white bow tie.* Black ties and tuxedo coats are restricted to stag parties.

While it may sound absurd to mention such a proceeding I wish to state emphatically that unless all of the male members can wear dress suits, dress clothes are best omitted. I once attended a concert given by a mandolin orchestra, in which several of the men appeared in evening clothes, several in Tuxedo and the remainder in business suits. Imagine the picture presented by the second mandolin section, in which several of the players were faultlessly attired, while on all sides of them, a variety of brown and green business suits, with here and there a blotch of clothes in pepper and salt greeted the eye.

I may be considered narrow-minded, but before that orchestra had played a note, I felt intuitively that I should not enjoy the performance, and I didn't. The attack was as irregular as the dress, and the musical production was as careless as the appearance.

THE COSTUME CONCERT

In several instances, the writer has been quite perplexed in the matter of the attire which his orchestra affected, and realizing that the financial circumstances of several members would not permit the purchase of a dress suit, and realizing further, that as often happens, the players with the least means, were the best musicians in the orchestra, he set about to devise a

scheme by which all the members could be attired uniformly at a trifling expense. The result was the Spanish costume.

Inasmuch as both the mandolin and guitar are Spanish instruments it seemed to me to be quite in keeping with the instruments from an historical standpoint, to costume the players in Spanish peasant fashion, using a more elaborate costume for the director, concert-meister and soloists.

A detailed description of the costumes is unnecessary save that they may be made from vari-colored cambric at a cost of less than a dollar. Bright colors are characteristic of Spain, and it is not incongruous to secure a color scheme even conglomerate in result. When backed by a woodland or garden setting the costumed mandolin-festival concert is a success from the standpoint of the picturesque to say the least.

A variety of patterns may be found in either *Butterick, Ladies' Home Journal,* or *Pictorial Review* lists. The frontispiece shows a costume festival, but the brilliant colors add a touch of fantastic realism that always captivates an audience.

When the conventional white dresses and dress suits are available use them, but rather than a conglomerate of business, stag dinner and dress attire, I greatly prefer the Spanish costume.

ACKNOWLEDGING APPLAUSE

In orchestras of more than eight players the director should acknowledge the applause. In trios, quartets and quintets, it is quite proper for the players to rise from their chairs and bow in a dignified manner.

Unless a selection is a double one, the director should leave the stage at the conclusion of each number, returning if the applause be insistent, making acknowledgment with a dignified bow.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The mandolin orchestra is now recognized as a legitimate, musical factor, and is worthy of the serious consideration of any musician. I believe that the time is not far distant, when a large mandolin orchestra will tour this country and demonstrate to the public the wonderful possibilities of our instru-

ments, and when this time comes the plectral instruments will become as standardized as any of the instruments of the conventional orchestra, and prejudice and narrowmindedness will give way to a whole hearted acceptance of the mandolin and kindred, as true musical instruments.